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WHAT

CONGREGATIONALISM

HAS ACCOMPLISHED DURING THE PAST CENTURY.

By CHRISTOPHER CUSHING.

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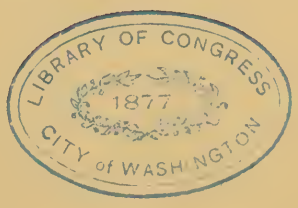

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WHAT CONGREGATIONALISM HAS ACCOMPLISHED DURING THE PAST CENTURY.[1]

THE relations of Congregationalism to our colonial history and to the shaping of our national institutions have frequently been made the theme of discourse, and with them we may all be presumed to be familiar. Our national historian tells us that "John Calvin, by birth a Frenchman, was to France the apostle of the Reformation; but his faith had ever been feared as the creed of republicanism."[2] Edward Randolph, who, as agent of Charles II, endeavored to destroy the liberties of the colonists, complained of the independence exercised in the government of Massachusetts as "one chief occasion of the many mutinies and distractions in other of his majesty's foreign plantations"; and seeing that this independence resulted chiefly from the Congregational polity of the churches, he undertook to secure a change in the ministry, sending to England for men who would labor to establish here a different form of church government. The first political text-books used by the statesmen who founded the republic were written by ministers as an exposition or defence of the Congregational polity of the churches. From our earliest history to the present time our New England churches have been the warmest supporters of our government.

Mindful of the specific theme assigned me, I shall confine my observations to the present century. In fact, within these limitations the theme is so vast as to be embarrassing. To give the details is impossible; to indulge only in general statements is unsatisfactory. On such a theme generalities would not be instructive, nor could they be characterized as "glittering." A hundred years, which the memory of no living man can compass, — a hundred years in this fast age is more than a thousand years when the pyramids were built.

[1] Read before the Alumni of Andover Seminary, June 28, 1876.

[2] Bancroft, Vol. II, p. 174.

Emerson tells us that "the poet never plants his foot except on a mountain peak." It is only the prominent points in the century which we can touch to-day: the deep, the beautiful valleys must be left all unexplored; and as we pass on from peak to peak, I fear the whole scene will be made unattractive by the want in your guide of a poet's vision or a poet's fancy.

I. The first point on which we will alight is *the numerical strength of the Congregationalists.*

At the commencement of the century there were, so far as can be ascertained, about 700 Congregational churches in our land: now there are nearly 3,500. The number of members in the Congregational churches then it is impossible to state with any degree of accuracy: the present number is about 350,000. This gives an average at the present time of about 100 members to each church.

The entire population of this country, a hundred years ago, is variously estimated to have been from 2,750,000 to 3,500,000:[1] now we have about 40,000,000. Then we had one Congregational church to every 4,000 or 5,000 inhabitants: now we have only one such church to something over 11,000 inhabitants. Hence, although the numerical increase of our churches is encouraging in itself, it is not so in its ratio to the increase of our population. The further fact cannot escape our attention, that our growth is slight compared with that of other denominations. A century ago the Congregationalists stood first, and now they rank as the seventh among the different denominations. Then, viewed as respects the number of their churches, the eight leading denominations ranked as follows: Congregational, Baptist, Church of England, Presbyterian, Lutheran, German Reformed, Dutch Reformed, Roman Catholic. Now the order is, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Christian, Lutheran, Congregational, Protestant Episcopal.

The German Reformed and the Dutch Reformed have fallen out of sight, and the Methodist and Christian denominations have not only entered the list but become conspicuous.

At the commencement of the century there were, in all, something over 1,900 church organizations in this country: now there are about 75,000. Then there was one church to

[1] The first census was taken in 1790.

every 1,700 or 1,800 souls: now there is a church to every 500 or 600 souls.

The complaint is sometimes made that there are too many churches in our land. The foregoing figures furnish the presumption that the fault, if there be one, does not lie at our door. We have not increased our churches as the population has increased; in the swift competition we have yielded the track to others. So true is this that the only question for us to consider respecting our own course is, whether we have been faithful to our trust?

We have met with great losses.

In the Unitarian defection 96 churches in Massachusetts were separated from our fellowship, and 30 additional parishes excluded evangelical preaching from their pulpits.[1] Thus there was a loss to our denomination of 126 houses of worship, which, with the parish and church funds, involved a loss to us of not less than $750,000. At that period this was a heavier blow to our denomination than these figures indicate to us, who are now familiar with larger numbers and an inflated currency. Moreover, these parishes were chiefly among the largest, wealthiest, and most intellectual in the State.

Another heavy reduction of our forces resulted from the "Plan of Union" between us and the Presbyterians, adopted in 1801, which, in the language of the late Dr. Joseph S. Clark, made provision that "Presbyterians and Congregationalists, emigrating to the new settlements of the West, be encouraged to foster a spirit of 'mutual forbearance and accommodation'; that a Congregational church settling a Presbyterian minister, or *vice versa*, may still 'conduct their discipline' according to their own ecclesiastical principles; and that, in case the church be of a mixed character, partly Presbyterian and partly Congregational, they may 'choose a standing committee from the communicants of said church' to issue all cases of discipline without consulting anybody else, but allowing the condemned member to appeal, if he were a Presbyterian, to the Presbytery, if a Congregationalist, to the church." [2]

In the practical working of this "Plan of Union," the advantage generally accrued to the party having the stronger

[1] Dr. Clark's Congregational Churches in Massachusetts, p. 270.

[2] Ibid. pp. 241–2.

form of government. A Presbyterian minister presbyterianized his flock. The churches formed on the "Plan of Union" were put "under care of Presbytery," and the Presbytery *cared* for them! Thus hundreds of churches, composed chiefly of Congregational elements, have been turned away from our communion.

If we would estimate what Congregationalism has accomplished the last hundred years, we must include more than appears inside our denominational lines. The material which we have furnished the Presbyterians is not to be viewed simply as a loss to us. By means of that material we have moulded, in no small measure, the Presbyterian Church; we have supplied them not only with church-members but also with ministers. When Dr. Lyman Beecher found that he was to be tried for heresy, he encouraged Congregational ministers to connect themselves with Presbytery, that by the introduction of New England elements his own position and that of men who were in sympathy with him might be strengthened.

The first regularly ordained Presbyterian minister in North America [1] was taken from Congregational stock.

A large proportion of the ministers of the Presbyterian Church at the present time are of New England birth. Not less than two hundred and fifty of them have been educated in a single New England college. Congregationalism has furnished for the theological seminaries of the Presbyterian Church more than a score of professors. Of the seven professors now in the Union Theological Seminary, of New York, *five*, and among them the most prominent, were formerly pastors of Congregational churches. Of the two hundred and fifty-five Presbyterian ministers of whom Dr. Sprague gives a sketch in his annals, fifty-three were born in New England. Many of the leading men of the Assembly, such as Sprague and Spring, among the honored dead; Humphrey, the moderator of the recent reunited body; Hatfield, Stearns, and March, and others too numerous to mention, are men of Congregational antecedents. We have, to a great extent, congregationalized the denomination. Practically, the Presbyterian churches now settle and dismiss their own ministers without being subject, as of old, to the authority of the session. The

[1] Rev. Jedediah Andrews, Philadelphia, 1698–1747. Born in Hingham, Mass.

denomination may boast, if they will, of their peculiarities; but should their Scotch ancestry return to earth and enter their assembly, the old heroes would hardly recognize them as kith or kin. We can scarcely imagine their surprise when they should learn that their old standards are now received only "for substance." What would be their dismay when attending a church meeting to see women voting! Congregationalists generally do not favor women's voting, even in ecclesiastical affairs, or addressing promiscuous assemblies. It is claimed by some that in certain lines the Presbyterians are more radical and revolutionary than the Congregationalists. We do not care to be responsible for all their faults, but we do think we can claim no small measure of credit for their true progress and enlightenment.

We have furnished elements for other denominations as well. Mr. Bancroft, in his history, first published in 1837, testified that at that recent date the Puritans of New England were "the parents of one third of the whole white population of the United States."[1] Who believes that there would have been a lay delegation at the present time in the Methodist Episcopal Conference had it not been for Congregational blood in that church, and the influence of Congregational principles?

Even an Episcopal rector on the Pacific coast, referring to the spirit of liberty pervading his church, recently declared, "My church is not Episcopalian: it is Congregational; for even the women will do as they please in spite of me."

We have not kept all our flock within our own fold, but those who have gone out from us still bear our mark. It is no slight honor to have moulded the institutions of our land and the character of the people. Why we have not retained our hold as a denomination upon a larger portion of our population, — why we have not grown as rapidly as other denominations, is an interesting subject of investigation. The explanation is not found, as it seems to me, in the suggestion of a scholarly writer, of broad-church sympathies, who ascribes it to a "wide-spread reaction against the whole dogmatic apprehension of Christianity."[2] The Baptists have retained their Calvinism, and

[1] Vol. I, p. 468.

[2] Prof. J. L. Diman, North American Review, January, 1876, p. 24.

yet, as a denomination, have made rapid strides. The Presbyterians boast of their "precise dogmatic system," and yet have vastly increased their numbers and their power. If we have made comparatively slow progress the explanation is to be found rather in such considerations as the following: —

(1.) Because, with a high-church assumption, we have theoretically taken the ground that our churches are churches of Christ, and do not belong to a denomination.

(2.) Because we have practically failed to appreciate and commend our church polity.

(3.) Because, in our extreme catholicity and excessive generosity, we have spent our strength in building up other denominations.

The work which we have done outside of our own lines is a noble one; yet we cannot but feel that a still nobler work would have been wrought had we imitated the priests of ancient Israel, and built over against our own house.

We would not speak disparagingly of what has been accomplished within our own lines. Of the 700 churches in our fellowship a century ago, 516 still remain on our list. To a just apprehension of our work we must include in our view the 325 churches and 76,000 church members which we have gathered on the foreign field, while even at home we have multiplied our churches five-fold.

II. The second point on which we will rest our foot is *the benevolent operations of the Congregationalists.*

In the latter part of the eighteenth century a few local societies were formed with particular reference to the Christianizing of the Indians. A "society for propagating the gospel in North America" originated on the other side of the water, and had commissioners in this country. As early as June, 1762, these commissioners sent Rev. Eli Forbes, of Brookfield, and Rev. Mr. Rice, afterward of Westminster, with Mr. Elisha Gunn, of Montague, as interpreter, to the Indians of the Susquehanna Valley, where, among the Tuscaroras, they "opened two schools, one for adults and another for children, gathered a church, and administered special ordinances to them." [1] Mr. Forbes, on his return

[1] Sermon of Rev. Joseph I. Foot, Note *w*, p. 91, preached Nov. 27, 1828; reprint, 1843.

brought four Indian youths with him, whom he educated and sent back to instruct their nation.[1] "The Congregational Missionary Society in the counties of Berkshire, Mass., and Columbia, N. Y.," was founded in 1798; the Connecticut Missionary Society was organized the same year, and the Massachusetts Missionary Society in 1799. These societies had for their object the diffusion of "the knowledge of the gospel among the heathen, as well as other people in the remote parts of our country, where Christ is seldom or never preached."

The Hampshire Missionary Society was organized in 1802, and "The Massachusetts Society for promoting Christian Knowledge" in 1803. The latter was for "the benevolent purpose of promoting evangelical truth and piety: in the first place, by a charitable distribution of religious books among poor and pious Christians, and also among the inhabitants of new towns and plantations; and secondly, by supporting charity schools and pious missionaries in places where the means of religious instruction are sparingly enjoyed."

As early as January, 1803, the Brookfield Association contemplated the formation of a missionary society in Worcester County. In 1806 it was voted to attempt such an organization, and this action resulted in the formation of a Society at Lancaster, in the fall of 1807, called "The Missionary Society in the counties of Worcester and Middlesex." The control of this Society soon fell into the hands of unevangelical men, and this led the association which initiated it to withdraw from it their sympathy and support.

The Connecticut Bible Society was formed in May, and the Massachusetts Bible Society in July in the year 1809; the American Board was formed in 1810; and while all these movements in behalf of the heathen and the destitute in distant portions of our land were inaugurated and carried forward for a period of more than fifty years, it was not until 1818 that the "Domestic Missionary Society of Massachusetts Proper" was formed "to assist needy churches, parishes, and waste places" in the State, a work now familiarly known as Home Missions.

The decade from 1810 to 1820 was remarkable for the origin of great benevolent movements. The Howard Benevolent

[1] Peter Whitney's History of the County of Worcester, 1793, p. 75.

Society of Boston was formed in 1812; the American Tract Society, Boston, in 1814; the American Education Society and the Massachusetts Peace Society, in 1815; the American Bible Society, the Boston Female Jews Society, and the Boston Society for the Religious and Moral Instruction of the Poor, now known as the Boston City Missionary Society, in 1816; the American Colonization Society in 1817. The American Home Missionary Society was formed in 1826, and the two Missionary Societies in Massachusetts, viz. "The Massachusetts Missionary Society," formed in 1799, and "The Domestic Missionary Society of Massachusetts Proper," formed in 1818, were combined in 1827 as "The Massachusetts Missionary Society," which was changed to the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society in 1844.

The American Tract Society, New York, was organized in 1825, and the American Peace Society and the American Seamen's Friend Society in 1828.

From the Foreign Evangelical Association of 1837, changed to the Foreign Evangelical Society in 1839, the American Protestant Society of 1843 and the Christian Alliance formed in 1843, a new organization, under the name of the American and Foreign Christian Union, was formed in 1849.

The Society for the promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West was formed in 1843; the American Congregational Union in 1853, and the Congregational Library Association, now known as The American Congregational Association, the same year.

It would be impossible to name in such an address as this all the minor organizations for benevolent work, or to give a detailed account of such societies as have been named. I shall restrict myself to a few general statements respecting what are now known as the six co-operative societies engaged in our denominational work.

(1.) The American Board, the oldest of the six, formed in 1810, was originated by Congregationalists, although the Presbyterian and the Dutch Reformed churches soon shared in its management. Upon the division of the Presbyterian Church in 1837, the old-school branch formed a separate organization for missionary work; and the Dutch Reformed

Churches withdrew from the American Board in 1857. When the two branches of the Presbyterian Church reunited in 1870, the new-school churches withdrew, leaving the American Board to the Congregationalists. The receipts of the Board have been $15,500,000. It has established 48 missions, sustained 1,600 missionaries, gathered 325 churches, received 76,000 church members, given instruction to 400,000 pupils, and printed 1,420,000,000 pages for the promotion of its gigantic work in seeking the conversion of the heathen world.

(2.) The American Education Society, organized in 1815, and the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West, organized in 1843, were united as the American College and Education Society in 1874. This Society, embracing both branches, has received about $3,000,000, aided in preparing for the gospel ministry 6,300 young men, and helped to endow 22 colleges or theological seminaries, — a record of which any Society may well be proud.

(3.) The American Home Missionary Society was organized in 1826. The Presbyterians, the Associate Reformed, and the Dutch Reformed were associated with us in the formation and early management of this Society. The Associate Reformed and Dutch Reformed soon retired without formal action. The Presbyterians continued their co-operation until a portion of their churches commenced taking up contributions for planting Presbyterian churches "in advance of all others," thus diminishing their contributions to our common treasury, while still using our common treasury for the support of their poor churches. The exposure of this practice brought the subject of co-operation definitely to the consideration of the Presbyterians, and in 1861 they withdrew from the organization. The entire receipts of this Society have been over $7,500,000 ($7,621,071). Under its direction 31,486 years of ministerial service have been performed; the gospel has been preached in 43 States and Territories; its missionaries have organized 1,889 churches; and there have been added to the churches which have received its aid 265,297 souls.

(4.) The Congregational Publishing Society came into existence through a tortuous course. The Congregationalists, the Baptists, the Episcopalians, and the Methodists co-oper-

ated in the organization of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Union, May 24, 1825, auxiliary to the American Sunday School Union organized in Philadelphia the previous year. The Episcopalians and the Methodists soon withdrew from the Massachusetts Society, but the Baptists and the Congregationalists continued to work together until 1832. On the 30th of May of that year they made an amicable separation, and the Society was dissolved. The next day the Congregationalists formed the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, which, for a time at least, co-operated with the American Sunday School Union. The American Doctrinal Tract Society was organized in 1829. Its name was changed in 1850 to The Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, and further changed in 1854 to The Congregational Board of Publication. This Society united with the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society in 1868, under the name of the Congregational Sabbath School and Publishing Society, and the present name, The Congregational Publishing Society, was assumed in 1870. The receipts of this Society for benevolent purposes, beginning with the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society in 1832, and not including what was given to the Doctrinal Tract Society under its various phases, previous to the union in 1868, have amounted to about $150,000.

(5.) The American Missionary Association was formed Sept. 3, 1846. It soon combined in itself four elements or pre-existing organizations. (1.) The Amistad Committee, which had in charge the interests of the Amistad captives. (2.) The Union Missionary Society, organized in Hartford, Conn., and having an anti-slavery aim. (3.) A committee for West India Missions, formed in 1844, to sustain some missionaries from Oberlin, who had attempted a self-supporting mission; and (4.) The Western Evangelical Missionary Society, formed in 1843 by an association in Ohio to prosecute missionary operations among the Indians of the West. The association has devoted itself to both the foreign and the home field. It has had 9 missions abroad. It had at one time 29 stations and 70 foreign missionaries, 18 churches, with 1,500 members. It had also at one time 112 home missionaries, and 145 churches, with 5,223 members. It now devotes itself

chiefly to the three despised races in this land, — the Negroes, the Indians, and the Chinese. It has 56 churches at the South, with 3,601 members. It gives great prominence to the educational work among the freedmen. It has 7 chartered institutions of learning, and numerous schools. Its entire receipts have exceeded four millions of dollars ($4,148,832.53).

(6.) The American Congregational Union, the last of the six, was organized in 1853. It commenced at once gathering and publishing the statistics of the denomination, and now issues them annually in a form and with a completeness which invite comparison with those of any other denomination. The Union was the result of the Albany convention of 1852, and including the fund raised by that convention for church building and the forefathers' fund gathered in 1856, the receipts of the Union have been $791,185.21 ; 931 churches have been aided in the erection of houses of worship ; 959 houses have been built or restored. The amount paid to the churches is $633,091.70 ; the amount paid for parsonages, $778.35 ; and the amount paid for pastors' libraries, $3,201.83.

The entire receipts of these six denominational societies have been over $31,000,000. It may be suggested that a portion of this money has been contributed by members of other denominations, and hence that these entire receipts cannot be reckoned as the work of Congregationalists. This is true ; but on the other hand it is to be considered that what has been contributed outside of our denominational lines has come principally from Presbyterians, a large part of whom were of Congregational origin. Since we have given to Presbyterianism the men, it is a slight thing for us to be allowed the credit of what they have contributed through channels which are now in our hands On the other hand we have contributed large sums to aid the Presbyterians ; we gave thousands of dollars to furnish a library for Lane Seminary, and contributed $10,000 at one time to build houses of worship for the Presbyterians in Missouri.

Again, I have made no note of the large sums which we have contributed to organizations which continue to be of a union character, such as the Bible Society, the Tract Society, the Seaman's Friend Society, and others too numerous to

name. So thoroughly have we entered into benevolent work in all its ramifications, that it is impossible to separate what we have done from what has been done by others, and establish a distinctive claim to it.

In a review of the benevolent work of the century in its relations to Congregationalism, we find some very remarkable things : —

First. The most of the great religious and benevolent movements of the age originated with us.

Second. After we commenced the organization of benevolent societies, for more than fifty years we never organized one under a Congregational name, or on a distinctively denominational basis. The American Congregational Union, organized in 1853, was the first denominational Society which we ever formed.

Third. We never withdrew from a union Society, except in the case of the American and Foreign Christian Union, and then only on the ground of its mal-administration.

Fourth. Of the six co-operative Congregational Societies which we now sustain, five were originally union societies, and were made denominational only by the withdrawal of other denominations from them. Four of them still retain an undenominational name. We are not schismatics. If we work by ourselves, it is because others have left us to work alone.

Fifth. We have a smaller number of denominational objects for which we make annual appeals to the churches than any other of the great evangelical denominations of Christians. While we have six, the Baptists have seven, the Methodists eight, the Presbyterians eight, and the Episcopalians nine.

Sixth. We are the only denomination which embraces union societies on the schedule on which we make our annual returns of benevolent contributions. The Methodists report what they contribute to the Bible Society. Other denominations have a column for miscellaneous charities ; but many of our State bodies still give prominence, or at least specific mention of contributions to union societies.

Other denominations have learned that they can work most efficiently within denominational lines. Hence, to do so is not necessarily schismatic, but only an adroit adaptation of means

to ends. We commend their efficiency, should we not emulate their skill?

But, waiving the question of modes and methods, we have, during the past century, accomplished a work in the planting of Christian institutions, in the extension of Christian influences, which we may review with satisfaction, and with gratitude to Him who is the Giver of faith and the Author, in us, of every benevolent purpose, and through whose gracious aid our efforts are crowned with success.

III. The third point of observation is, *the agency of Congregationalists in moral reforms.*

Of the various branches of reform I will notice but two, viz. temperance and anti-slavery. The evils of intemperance have not escaped notice from the days of Lot down to modern times. The first efforts at reform in this century were not very radical. A Society was organized at Moreau, New York, in 1808, the members of which pledged themselves not to drink "rum, gin, whiskey, wine, or any distilled spirits, or compositions of the same," except in cases of sickness, and "at public dinners." This was as accommodating as the pledge of a Society in Yale College, in 1840, which excluded the use of all drinks which had more than six per cent of alcohol in them, and was designed to allow the members to indulge in the festivities of the political campaign, in which "coon-skins and hard cider" bore so conspicuous a part. The Rev. Thomas Snell, of North Brookfield, Mass., preached a foreign missionary sermon, in 1812, in which he suggested that his people should drink less liquor, and from what they thus saved make a contribution to the missionary cause, and he accompanied the suggestion with the agreement to save from his own liquor bill the next year the sum of three dollars. He afterwards became a stanch temperance man. The Massachusetts Society for the suppression of intemperance was organized in Boston in 1813. It was a temperance, but not a total abstinence society. Dr. Lyman Beecher preached his famous six sermons on temperance in the winter of 1825–'26. Rev. Dr. Hewitt, of Bridgeport, Conn., early appeared as a temperance advocate. Rev. Dr. Justin Edwards, of this seminary, will be remembered for his prominence in the temperance cause. In

1825 he united with Rev. Dr. Woods, and fourteen others, in forming in Boston "The American Society for the Promotion of Temperance." In the following year "The American Temperance Union" was organized in the same city, — where else could a temperance movement be expected to originate? I cannot dwell longer on this theme, having said enough already to indicate the relation of the Congregationalists to the inauguration of this great moral enterprise.

On the subject of slavery a fuller treatment seems necessary. It was in 1776, just a hundred years ago, that Rev. Samuel Hopkins published his *Dialogue showing it to be the Duty and Interest of the American States to Emancipate all their African Slaves.* Societies were organized in several of the States from 1775 to the close of the eighteenth century, having for their object the gradual abolition of slavery, which exerted a strong influence in securing the extinction of slavery in several of the Northern States. The friends of liberty made a stout resistance to the admission of Missouri, as a slave State, in 1819 and 1820. In the article on "Slavery" in the *American Cyclopædia*, now in course of publication, it is stated that "the Missouri conflict was followed by a period of profound repose in regard to the whole subject. The publication, by Benjamin Lundy, a Quaker, of a small journal at Baltimore, entitled *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, was almost the only visible sign of opposition to slavery until William Lloyd Garrison established *The Liberator*, in Boston, Jan. 1, 1831." This statement accords with what is now a somewhat general impression, but it is not altogether truthful. When the *Liberator* was started, the Colonization Society had been in existence fourteen years, and an anti-slavery sentiment had been developed quite extensively in the direction of its plans and purposes. In the first volume of the *Liberator* (p. 121) we find the following declaration: "In 1826 the synod of Ohio held animated discussion on a question which had been referred to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, viz. 'Is the holding of slaves man-stealing?' — in the affirmative of which a large majority concurred." Here, on the authority of Mr. Garrison's own organ, a large majority of a quite numerous body of clergymen took the most thorough anti-slavery ground more than four years before his *Liberator* had being.

I have no disposition to deduct one iota from the credit due Mr. Garrison as an anti-slavery agitator. He was among the first to plant himself publicly on the theory of immediate emancipation, and at once he became conspicuous. As a debater he had remarkable powers, and his editorials were arousing; in the battle-cry of freedom, distinct and prominent were his bugle-blasts.

The Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society was formed in Boston, Jan. 1, 1832, and the American Anti-Slavery Society was formed in Philadelphia, Dec. 4, 1833. In less than five years the American Anti-Slavery Society had 1,350 auxiliary societies, embracing State societies in every free State in the Union except Indiana and New Jersey, and its total receipts reached $125,000.

Notwithstanding this rapid progress Mr. Garrison became impatient, and struck for reforms more radical in their character. As early as July 4, 1837, in an address delivered at Providence, he declared that he "stood forth in the spirit of prophecy to proclaim in the ears of the people that our doom *as a nation* is sealed." He added, "If history be not wholly fabulous, if revelation be not a forgery, if God be not faithless in the execution of His threatenings, the doom is certain and the interpretation thereof sure. The overthrow of the American confederacy is in the womb of events." He continued, "The corruptions of the *Church*, so called, are obviously more deep and incurable than those of the *State;* and therefore the *Church*, in spite of every precaution and safeguard, is first to be dashed in pieces." [1]

Soon it became evident that Mr. Garrison and a few of his compeers were bent on new reforms, viz. "Woman's Rights," "No Government," "Anti-Church," "Anti-Ministry," and "Anti-Sabbath." As these "other reforms, standing alone or on their own merits, could not get a hearing, or make any general lodgment in the public mind,"[2] Mr. Garrison and his sympathizers devised the plan of "sifting them in" upon the anti-slavery reform.

Rev. Amos A. Phelps, having a keener intellect, a more

[1] The true History of the late Division in the Anti-Slavery Societies, 1841, p. 8.
[2] Ibid. p. 15.

invincible power in logic than any other man who ever devoted himself to the cause of the slave, to whom, in my view, the anti-slavery cause in our land is under greater obligations than to any man living, or almost any other man among the honored dead, was the most prominent in discovering and exposing this plot. In this Mr. Phelps was sustained by others. Mr. Elizur Wright, Jr., now so well known in financial circles, wrote to Rev. Mr. Phelps, Oct. 26, 1837, "I have just received a letter from Garrison which confirms my fears that he has finished his course *for the slave.* At any rate, *his* plan of rescuing the slave by the destruction of human laws is fatally conflictive with ours. Only one of them can lead to any good result." [1]

The anti-slavery movement at the start favored the use of the elective franchise in behalf of the slave; but in 1838 the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, under the lead of Mr. Garrison, "was made to abandon its own original doctrines on the subject of political action, and become subservient to the promotion of the dogmas of non-governmentism." [2]

This led to a division in the anti-slavery ranks. The Massachusetts Abolition Society, under the lead of Mr. Phelps and his associates, was formed in 1839, and became auxiliary, not to the old American, but to the new American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.

From this time on, the Garrison party diminished in numbers and in influence; and the anti-slavery cause was carried forward, not under Mr. Garrison's lead, — not prominently through his aid, — for in large measure he was a hinderance rather than a help. He was wonderful for his power of vituperation, and his philippics continued to serve medicinally as an irritant; but he prejudiced the minds of religious men against the anti-slavery cause, while *the political movement, which ultimately proved the successful one,* ever after 1838 met with his opposition.

It is a remarkable fact that Mr. Garrison has produced no standard work on this subject. The *American Cyclopædia,* enumerating thirty-seven important volumes on slavery, includes in the catalogue nothing from his pen.

[1] The true History of the late Division in the Anti-Slavery Societies, p. 12.
[2] Ibid. p. 26.

If any one still claims that the Garrisonians were among the most efficient anti-slavery workers, so far as Congregationalism is concerned, be it remembered that the leading Garrisonians, Henry C. Wright, Parker Pillsbury, and Stephen S. Foster, imbibed their anti-slavery sentiments, but not their fanaticism, from Congregational sources, for they were originally Congregational ministers, or candidates for that office.

The only two men who were reckoned as martyrs in the anti-slavery cause, Lovejoy and Torrey, were Congregational ministers.

The representation is sometimes made that ministers were particularly backward in the anti-slavery reform.

Mr. Oliver Johnson, in 1837, declared "The anti-slavery car has rolled forward thus far, not only without the aid, but against the combined influence of the ministers and churches of the country."[1] Now, what are the facts in the case? I freely acknowledge that the church did not do its whole duty. In our own denomination, the prominent ministers, particularly, seemed to be unduly subject to commercial influences. Still, the true picture, although it has dark shades, is luminous and attractive.

Mr. Phelps made an investigation on this subject, and found that while, taking the country together, there was, on an average, one minister to five hundred people, — in the *early* anti-slavery conventions of those who signed the call for the conventions *more than one third were ministers*, and of the delegates present, *more than one fifth* were ministers. Thus, in the *unpopular* days of this reform, the ministers, while one to five hundred in the ratio of population, were among prominent anti-slavery men one to five. In 1837 there were, in Massachusetts, 19,206 members of anti-slavery societies, or one in thirty-six of the people. There were, at that time, seven hundred and ninety-two ministers in the State, of all denominations, and *nearly one half* of them were members of anti-slavery societies. Of the fifty-six agents employed by the American Anti-Slavery Society prior to 1837, forty-three were ministers. As a class, the ministers were not behind the people, but they were leaders in this cause.

[1] Liberator, Oct. 13, 1837.

Calvin Colton, who, if I mistake not, sometimes used the signature of "Junius," in a political tract, testified, "Nearly all the political abolitionists, and with scarcely an exception all the abolition preachers, lecturers, and missionaries are religious men. Religion, everywhere, is the high and holy sanction relied upon to enforce the doctrine."

The representation is sometimes made that the evangelical ministers were more backward in this reform, in its early days, than the so-called unevangelical; but this too is erroneous.

In 1837, of the Orthodox Congregational ministry in Massachusetts more *than one third* were members of anti-slavery societies, while of the Unitarian ministers there was only *one in eight.* The Anti-Slavery Society in Amherst College in 1834 had 76 members, of whom 70 were professors of religion; 30 of them had consecrated themselves to the foreign missionary work, and 20 to home missionary service at the West.

In 1834 the trustees of Lane Seminary prohibited the open discussion of slavery by the students, and four-fifths of the students withdrew from the institution. A number of them became at once anti-slavery lecturers. Theodore D. Weld, Henry B. Stanton, and Ichabod Codding went from State to State, defending the rights of the slave. While Mr. Weld was holding a series of meetings in Steubenville, Ohio, he noticed a young lawyer in his audience, evening after evening, taking notes. At the close of his last lecture the young man came forward and introduced himself, remarking, "I came here resolved to answer you, and have taken notes of every lecture, but you have converted me." That young lawyer was Edwin M. Stanton, and thus God raised up for Mr. Lincoln's administration a fit Secretary of War. The breaking up of the classes in Lane Seminary led to the organization of a theological department at Oberlin, and in this great Christian reform Oberlin took an early and prominent part. Mr. Finney refused to become president of the college unless colored students were allowed to enjoy its privileges. The Hon. Salmon P. Chase was wont to ascribe his elevation to the United States Senate to the influence of Oberlin.

In the recent national conflict, which was, in fact, a conflict between liberty and slavery, while the Episcopal Church, with

honorable exceptions, gave but feeble support to the government, as was true in the Revolutionary struggle, the Congregational ministry and churches were almost without exception patriotic. The late Gov. Washburn, of Vermont, whose official duty during the war was to secure recruits for the army and organize the military forces of the State, testified, a little before his death, that he found the churches all over the State rallying-points of patriotism, and the ministers his most efficient helpers.

Just after the close of the war a minister in Michigan testified that there was not a pastor, acting pastor, or supply of any Congregational church in the State who was not during the war a zealous patriot. One of the Iowa band, as the first missionaries to that State were called, after having been in Iowa twenty-five years, and having become extensively acquainted with the people, declared that he did not know of a member of a Congregational church in the State who was not during the war a supporter of the administration. In ten great States of the interior one fourth of all the adult male members of the Congregational churches enlisted as soldiers in the army.[1]

In this centennial year, while we bless God that we have lived to see our land an asylum for the oppressed and the home of the free, we may rejoice that our churches and our ministry have been among the most conspicuous in hastening the triumph of the right, in ushering in the Jubilee.

IV. One point remains to be touched, — *the Theological Crises through which the Congregationalists have passed.*

There is no other denomination in our land which has given such prominence to intellectual training and to doctrinal truth. In the early history of Connecticut a law was passed providing that no man should be entitled to recognition as a clergyman "who was not a graduate of Yale or Harvard, or of some foreign university."

The Congregationalists founded a college fifty-five years before any other denomination in our land, and they were the first to establish a theological seminary. Of the Apostle Paul it is said that he "spake boldly . . . disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God": we have shown ourselves his worthy successors by doing our full share

[1] The Home Missionary, Vol. 39, p. 4.

in "disputing and persuading." The doctrinal crises through which we have passed have been attended with incidental evils, but on the whole they have resulted in great good; they have given definiteness and distinctness to our views.

(1.) Our controversy with the Unitarians served to fix the limitations of our thought as to the Divine nature. We are now careful to state that we do not use the word "Person" in its relation to the Trinity in its ordinary sense, but rather in a technical sense, — not as synonymous with being, but rather to indicate a distinction which the Scriptures reveal but which they do not analytically explain. We avoid the use of language which would suggest a belief in three Gods, or expose us to the charge of believing that one is three and three are one. While rejecting the Sabellian idea of a modal Trinity, a Trinity of mere manifestation, inadequate to explain the representations of Scripture, we accept the triune nature of the Godhead as a revealed fact, without attempting to decide whether the Trinity pertains to the substance or only to the attributes of the infinite Being whom we worship as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Careful lest we seem to know too much, we accept the scriptural teachings as a matter of faith.

There has been one prolonged controversy, commencing with Edwards in the middle of the last century, and ending a century later with the accepted distinction between "The Theology of the Intellect and the Theology of the Feelings." At its varied phases we can give a glance only.

(2.) Edwards, in his *Treatise on the Will*, established us in the faith that there is a Divine government which plans and controls all events, securing in the realm of moral beings the *certainty* of results without natural necessity, — a certainty not inconsistent with freedom. He, as a theologian, discriminated between general justice and retributive justice, showing how the former may be sustained while the latter is waived.

(3.) Samuel Hopkins, born about a score of years later, developed the idea of responsibility as pertaining to character, rather than to our nature in the strict sense of the word. Then followed two men of opposite extremes, — Burton and Emmons, — each having his disciples.

(4.) Asa Burton, as leader in the advocacy of the "Taste Scheme," made his theology accord with the poetry of Watts: —

> "So, on a tree divinely fair,
> Grew the forbidden food;
> Our mother took the poison there,
> And tainted all her blood."

(5.) Nathaniel Emmons, denying not only the moral character of passive states, but also the permanency of any individual choice, sought to limit our responsibility to a succession of exercises.

(6.) Dr. Taylor and Dr. Tyler assumed antagonistic positions, and the old-school and new-school war was waged with vigor.

The result of these contests is that a man is now recognized as Orthodox, —

(1.) Whether he believes that God so foreordains all events that they *cannot* be otherwise, or simply that He so foreordains them that they *will* not be otherwise.

(2.) Whether he believes that all virtue can be resolved into benevolence, or that there are virtues which cannot be resolved into this generic love of sentient being.

(3.) Whether he believes that we sinned *in* Adam's sin, or only in consequence of it.

(4.) Whether he believes that we have by nature a sinful tendency, or simply that we have a tendency to sin.

(5.) Whether he believes that we are responsible for affections lying back of the will, or simply for that complex moral act known as a choice.

(6.) Whether he believes in a moral state which determines our choices, or in a predominant choice which determines our moral state, or even in a succession of choices, the essential uniformity of which gives fixedness to our moral character.

(7.) Whether he believes that our moral character is congenital, or that it begins at some indefinite period as soon as a moral choice is possible.

(8.) Whether he believes that regeneration, as wrought by the Holy Spirit, is a change in the moral nature or only in the moral character; or, in supposable cases of infants, a change

in the balance of susceptibilities, securing the development of a right moral character.

(9.) Whether he believes that in the atonement, Christ suffered the literal penalty of the violated law, or merely that by His sufferings and death He so honored the law, as to open the way for the forgiveness of sin.

(10.) Whether he believes that Christ's righteousness is literally imputed to the redeemed, or that on the ground of His atonement they are treated as righteous.

(11.) Whether he believes that without the Holy Spirit man cannot come to Christ, or that he can but will not.

(12.) Whether he believes that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, or merely that it is incidental to that moral system which is the necessary means of the greatest good.

These are philosophical differences in respect to which, as the result of our controversies, we have gained the largest liberty. With these philosophical differences, the oneness of our faith remains. We believe in a Divine Governor, revealed as a Triune Being; that He controls all events, and that He sustains His law by infinite sanctions.

We believe that man, while possessed of amiable natural virtues, is yet by nature entirely sinful, and as such is exposed to the penalty of the Divine law.

We believe that through the vicarious sufferings and death of Christ, man has the offer of pardon, and that the Holy Spirit is sent into the world to renew and sanctify the soul; that, if man resists the Spirit and rejects the Saviour, he seals his own doom, and if he yields and believes, he makes his eternal salvation sure.

Call these doctrines Calvinistic, Edwardean, Scriptural, or what you please, they are the doctrines of our denomination, and they are in some respects distinctive.

The representation has been repeatedly made that the National Council at Oberlin modified our doctrinal position as a denomination, and put us on a simply evangelical basis.

The absurdity of this representation is seen in the fact that the National Council has no authority whatsoever respecting the doctrinal position of our churches. The doctrinal basis of

the denomination is decided by the creeds of our local churches. The churches never authorized their delegates to the Council to modify in any way their doctrinal position, or even to define it. The Council was organized for Christian work, and not for the control of our dogmatic faith. We are told that the Council received into its membership a Kentucky church which was avowedly formed on an undenominational basis. This is true, but what does it prove? Simply that the Council was willing to have such a church unite with it in Christian work. It was an exceptional case. It is ridiculous to suppose that, by the simple admission of a representation of that church, the Council reduced the doctrinal standard of all our churches to the level of that church. The apostle exhorts, "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye"; but we are not to suppose that he intended in this, that the church should become weak in the faith, or that he imagined that by heeding his exhortation the church would reduce its standard of faith to that of the weak brother whom it received.

It is doubtless true that the feeble church in Kentucky, which was represented by a brother who had heroically defended the rights of the slave in the midst of persecution and of peril, had nothing in its creed above the level of Arminianism, but it is preposterous to hold that by the simple recognition of him as a Christian worker, and allowing him to unite with the body, the Council, as "at one fell swoop," reduced three thousand Congregational churches to the position of Independent Methodists; and yet there are churches being organized at the West on this low standard, on the ground that that Council fixed the denominational basis at that level! It is time that this matter were better understood. As a denomination, we believe in a God, the security of whose government is not a merely incidental result of His foreknowledge,—a God whose purposes are as far-reaching as the events in His realm.

From all the doctrinal contests through which we have passed we have come out with a liberalized faith, but with the faith of the fathers still, the faith once delivered to the saints. It is not the minimum of truth which is essential to salvation, but that glorious system of truths, which, in its consistency and coherence, is as resplendent as the great white throne.

As we survey our position at the close of the century, we find some things which still need to be settled, or which, at least, need a still further process of induration. I refer to two points, the one having reference to doctrine and the other to polity.

1. The doctrinal point involves two questions: —

First. Shall we continue to exclude from our communion those who do not embrace the so-called evangelical doctrines?

Second. Shall we receive only as exceptional cases those who do not accept the characteristic creeds of our churches?

2. The point as to polity respects the rights and responsibilities of the churches as to persons to whom, under the laws of fellowship, they have given ministerial standing.

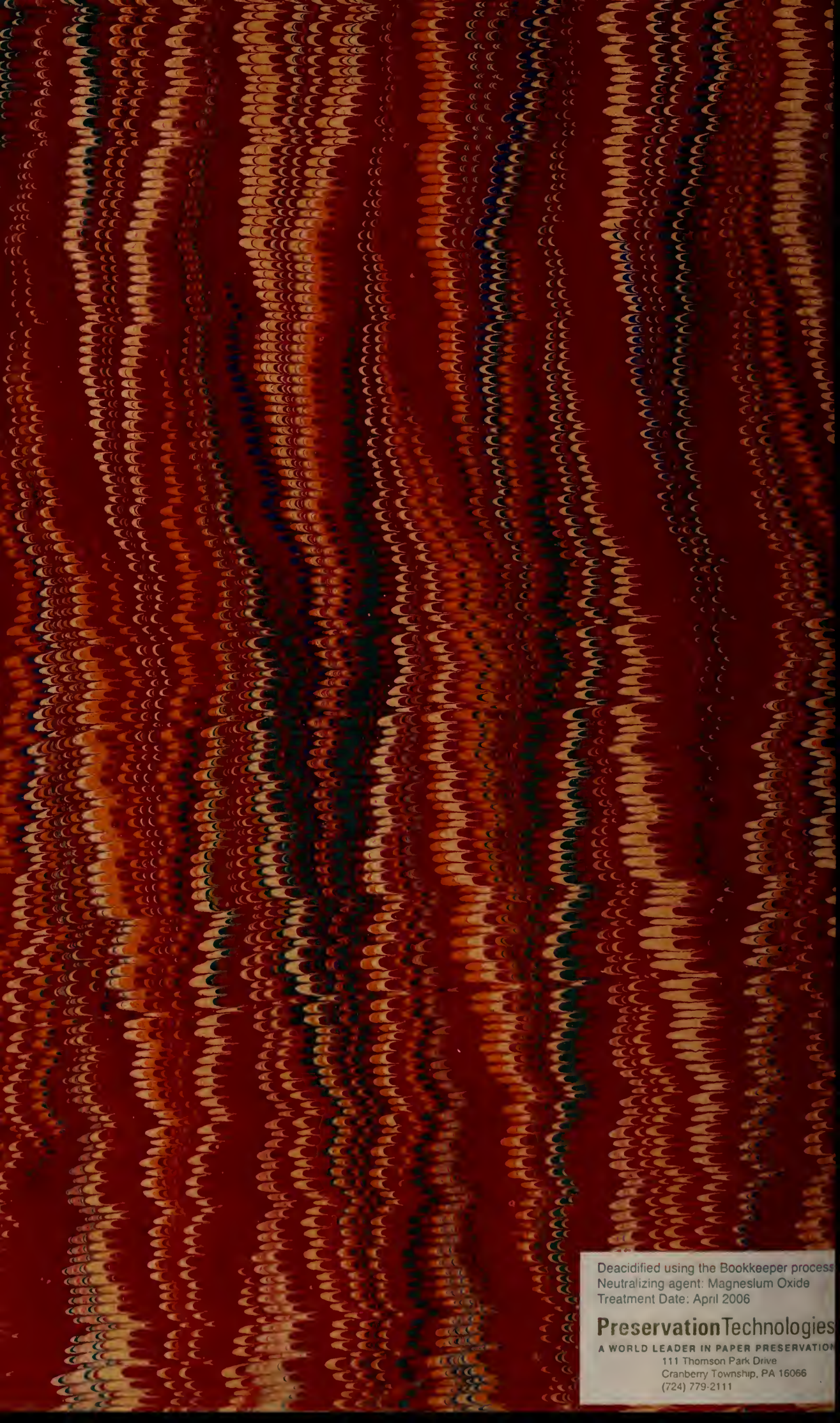
If we do not continue to exclude from our communion those who do not embrace the so-called evangelical doctrines; if we lower our standard and receive into our communion those who do not accept the scriptural doctrine of the endless punishment of the wicked, what will be the effect on the convictions of men as to the evil of sin and the sanctions of law? If we view with favor a poetic and a mystical theory of the atonement, reducing it to a moral influence upon man, we leave the throne without support and the lost soul without a ransom.

If we take from our creeds what is characteristic of us as a denomination, or receive into our churches as a rule, and not exceptionally, those who do not believe what is characteristic of us, what have we as a rallying-point? Do you say "We will rally around the Cross"? Are we so bigoted as not to think that others do the same? Does any one say "Let us rally around our Congregationalism"? I fear that, if asked, What is Congregationalism? such men would leave us a very small point to rally around! If our Congregational churches are to have vitality, permanency, and power, we must have a characteristic doctrinal basis as well as a polity. Other denominations have their rallying-points, distinct and conspicuous. If we have none, these denominations will draw to themselves those who can work together with harmony and enthusiasm, and leave for us only such materials as David had in the cave of Adullam. Does any one say "Let us take a broad platform and stand forth as the Church of Christ, and ultimately

the sects will all come to our standard"? We can only say on that theory, judging from present developments, the millennium is not very near.

As to the remaining point: If we give the right hand to a minister can we ever take it back? It has been said that we can, by withdrawing our hand from the church which sustains him. That mode of operation was devised when there were no ministers except pastors of churches, and a man's ministerial standing depended upon his pastorate. Now more than half of our ministers are not pastors, and the majority of our ordinations are ordinations of evangelists; now a minister's standing does not depend upon his pastorate. Has Congregationalism any power of adaptation to the new circumstances? Must we continue to use our fathers' ox-team while all the rest of the world are whistling by? Thank God, not so long as Andover is in the ascendant!

From "Zion's hill" we have looked back and looked around. In the retrospect we see abundant cause for thanksgiving. From our present position we can gather hope as to the future. As a denomination, we are possessed of the missionary spirit; we are identified with liberty, morality, and progress; we cherish intellectual culture, doctrinal truth, and practical godliness; and though our sky be not cloudless, we are cheered by the remembrance of the words of Robert Hall, "The vapors which gather round the rising sun and follow it in its course seldom fail at the close of it to form a magnificent theatre for its reception, and to invest with variegated tints and with a softened effulgence the luminary which they cannot hide."



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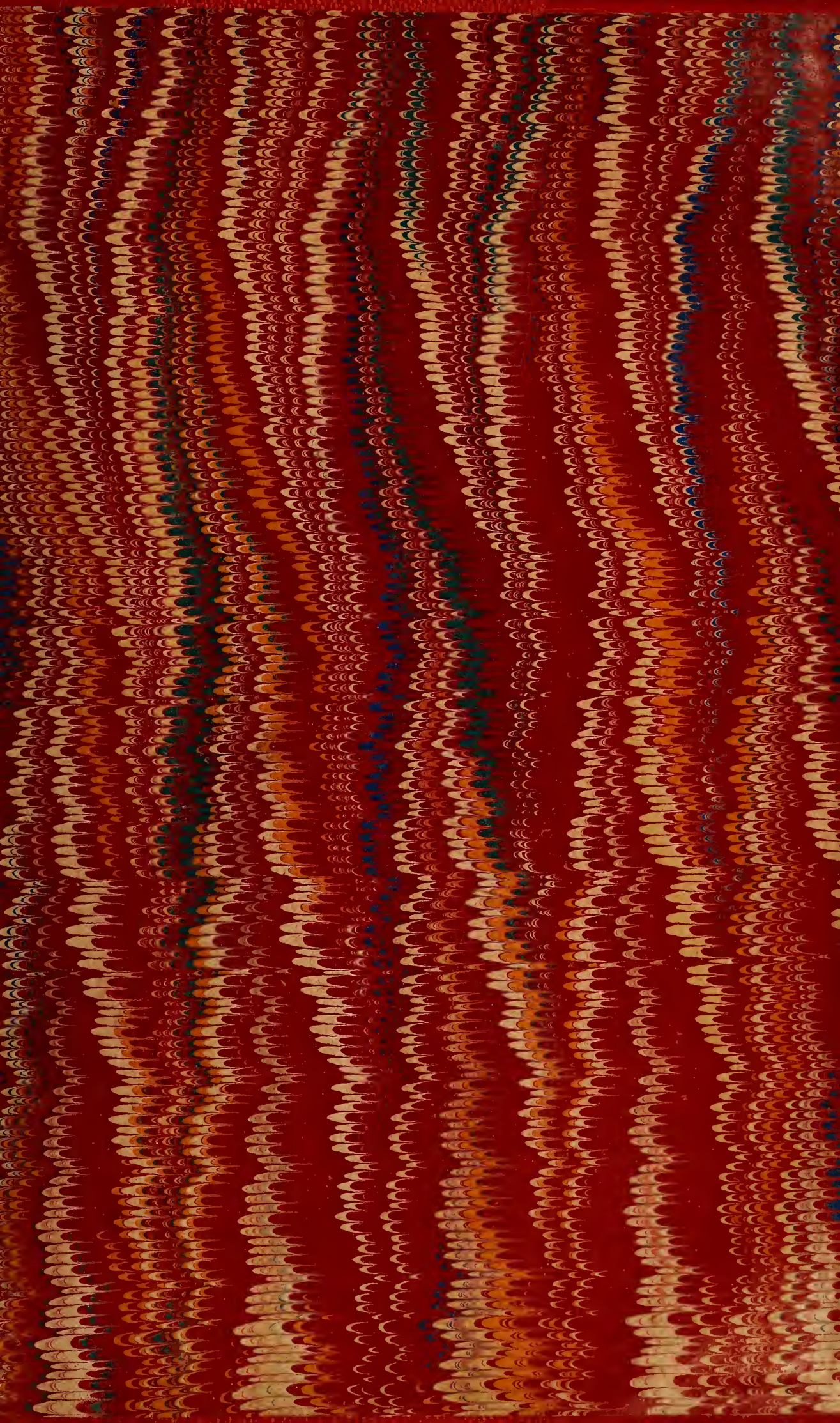

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